

# MANAS

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## THINKING ABOUT FREEDOM

THE MANAS article, "The Two Sides of Freedom," printed in *Frontiers* in the issue for Nov. 18, has brought vigorous objection from a reader. Briefly, the point of this article was that it is necessary to think about freedom in two ways: (1) from the viewpoint of attempting to define the society which would allow a maximum of freedom for the individual; and (2) from the viewpoint of the individual who is endeavoring to *be* free. The *Frontiers* article found these viewpoints distinctively different and sought to show how and why they are different. Our critic disagrees with the conclusion reached. He writes:

Everything sounded all right until I came to the conclusion which the writer draws from his reading of Maslow, as against his reading of Mills (and all in connection with the letter from a reader posing the problem of the freedom of the individual in contemporary society): "Here, the point is that the man who practices freedom is only carelessly or incidentally an angry critic of his environment." Just where this places Mills, whom the writer regards with so much admiration as to consider him "the most courageous and the most effective social critic of our time," I don't know. But this fact aside, and continuing with the conclusion, the writer says: "an entirely different direction of research is called for, when the inquiry into the nature of freedom concerns, not social prohibitions and confinements, but the nature of the individual, who is, or is to be, *free*."

Now I fail to see any point in criticizing the environment, if it makes no difference what that environment makes in the life of the individual. If we can be free no matter how oppressive or how confining our environment, why then, let's not worry about the environment at all, but simply live and be free!

But the argument from Maslow's study of creative people is fallacious. The first error consists in Maslow's lumping of all creative people together, and failing to differentiate between levels of creativity. There is a profound difference between a creative "cook" and a creative thinker. This difference consists in the fact that creativity in the one is confined to a narrow skill, and even if the person is creative in other areas, his creativity in the one area does not have repercussions upon his creativity, or his life, in other areas. The cook can be as creative as he wants in his cooking, but no one will suppose that his creativity in the realm of cooking will influence his attitudes and convictions in philosophy, or psychology or politics. There is no connection between them. But the creativity of the thinker spreads throughout his entire being and, providing he takes his thinking seriously, will affect his feelings, his ideas, his preferences, his enjoyments throughout the various areas of his life. And here is precisely where the trouble starts, for when this creativity spreads outside of the realm of thought into the realm of feeling, attitude and activity, it carries the individual away from the conventional patterns of responses

of the community. The result is that he finds himself alienated, cast apart, isolated. The truly creative, thinking individual has a stake, a very vital stake, in the character of his environment, for this precise reason that it affects his life so deeply, so profoundly.

Accordingly, the conclusion I would draw after comparing Mills and Maslow—as the writer of the MANAS article has presented their views—is not that different approaches to society and to the individual are needed, but that there is something fundamentally wrong in an approach which ignores the character of the environment and the differences in types of creativity, and says that neither environment nor creativity has any necessary relationship with the other. This is a variety of free will which I fail to find any evidence for.

Let us first deal with the matters of the creativeness of cooks and other people. As the *Frontiers* writer said, there is a tendency to remain unimpressed by the example of a creative cook, and he was certainly right about this—our correspondent does not think much of originality in the kitchen. However, as "The Two Sides of Freedom" noted, Dr. Maslow had many more illustrations, by no means cooks. We would now quote some of these from his paper, except that it has been mailed to a subscriber who wanted very much to read it entire, and we have no other copy. Fortunately, there is at hand another paper on creative people by Maslow, "Emotional Blocks to Creativity," in which he makes some useful definitions. Early in this paper he says:

... what we have found during the last ten years or so is that, primarily, the sources of creativeness of the kind that we're really interested in, *i.e.*, the generation of really new ideas, are in the depths of human nature. We don't even have a vocabulary for it that's very good. You can talk in Freudian terms if you like; that is, you can talk about the unconscious. Or in the terms of another school of psychological thought, you may prefer to talk about the real self. But in any case it's a *deeper* self. It is deeper in an operational way, as seen by the psychologist, or psychotherapist; that is, it is deeper in the sense that you have to dig for it. It is deep in the sense that ore is deep. It's deep in the ground. You have to struggle to get at it through surface layers.

In his other paper—the one out on "loan"—Dr. Maslow said that this quality of creativeness "showed itself widely in the ordinary affairs of life, and ... showed itself not only in great and obvious products, but also in many other ways, in a certain kind of humor, a tendency to do *anything* creatively: *e.g.*, teaching, etc."

Here we see a measurable difference of opinion between our correspondent and Dr. Maslow. The latter proposes that this sort of creative ability affects all the things its

possessor does, while the former argues that only the creative *thinker* spreads his originality "throughout his entire being." We tend to side with Maslow in this difference, and not merely because we know a couple of creative thinkers who are not very good cooks. Dr. Maslow is saying that creativity is a deep-seated *attitude toward life*, which means that it will affect *everything* in the life of the individual so endowed. Of course, creative *activity* will vary with other factors, such as intellectual capacity and background, but the potentiality exists almost as a thing-in-itself. This, at any rate, is what we get from the following by Dr. Maslow:

*This is something that not only we don't know about, but that we're afraid to know about.* That is, there is resistance to knowing about it. . . . I'm speaking about what I'll call primary creativeness rather than secondary creativeness, the primary creativeness which comes out of the unconscious, which is the source of new discovery—of real novelty—of ideas which depart from what exists at this point. This is something different from what I'll call secondary creativity. . . .

Primary creativeness which comes out of the unconscious and which I have found in the specially creative people that I have selected to study carefully . . . is very probably a heritage of every human being. It is a common and universal sort of thing. Certainly it is found in all healthy children. It is the kind of healthy creativeness that any healthy child had and which is then lost by most people as they grow up. It is universal in another sense, that if you dig in a psychotherapeutic way, *i.e.*, if you dig into the unconscious layers of the person, you find it there. . . . The universal conclusion of psychoanalysts, and I am sure of all other psychotherapists as well, is that general psychotherapy may normally be expected to release creativeness which did not appear before the psychotherapy took place. It will be a very difficult thing to prove it, but that is the impression they all have. Call it expert opinion if you like. That is the impression of the people who are working at the job, for example, of helping people who would like to write but who are blocked. Psychotherapy can help them to release, to get over this block, and to get them started writing again. General experience therefore is that psychotherapy, or getting down to these deeper layers which are ordinarily repressed, will release a common heritage—something that we all have had—and that was lost.

Perhaps our point is made if we say that when a psychotherapist is concerned with helping a person to regain his creative flair, he does not start out by rearranging that individual's external environment. He does not concentrate on the political system or on the subject's economic status. These elements, while no doubt of some importance, are not of primary importance for the reason that uncreative people are uncreative in the best possible environments, and creative people remain creative in almost any circumstances. Of course, if you press a counter-argument to an extreme, you might say that even a genius will dry up if sufficiently oppressed by his surroundings. This is true in a measure. Fritz Kreisler can't play if you smash his fiddle. If you twist up a poet's environment, you may get twisted-up poetry; if you break down the familiar limits of experience of the artist, his art may get pretty far-out. But the pertinent comment, here, should concern the extraordinary resilience of the creative spirit. Take for example Viktor Frankl's account of how he came to develop the method of psychotherapy, which he named logotherapy:

Such psychotherapy was not concocted in the philosopher's arm chair nor at the analyst's couch; it took shape in the hard school of air-raid shelters and bomb craters, in concentration camps and prisoner of war camps. There occur acute states

of existential frustration—evanescence of any meaning to one's existence—which can become extremely dangerous. . . . In these extreme situations the ultimate question was to find a meaning to life and to account for the meaning of death. Man was compelled by his own will to render this account so that he could stand upright and die in a manner somewhat worthy of a human being. . . . One night, I remember, it seemed to me that I would die in the near future. And then I underwent perhaps the deepest experience I had in the concentration camp: While the concern of most comrades was "Will we survive the camp? For, if not, all this suffering has no meaning," the question which beset me was, "Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For, if not, then ultimately there is no meaning to survival; for a life whose meaning stands and falls on whether one escapes with it or not—a life whose meaning depends upon such a happenstance—ultimately would not be worth living at all."

If we are permitted to say that Dr. Frankl's origination and development of logotherapy—a therapy founded upon "man's will-to-meaning; that is to say, his deep-seated striving and struggling for a higher and ultimate meaning to his existence"—is a creative achievement, then, surely, it would be a terrible mistake to argue that since the most hideous circumstances were the occasion of this achievement, we have in *them* the pattern for an ideal environment! Manifestly, this is no way to plan for man's welfare as a creative being.

Planning for maximum creativity on the part of human beings is obviously a most difficult thing to do. The ideal environment for creation should contain great provocatives and no inhibiting influences. But what are the provocatives to creativity? Who would dare write the formula for them?

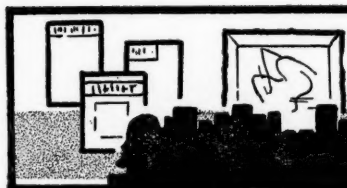
Any intelligent observer is likely to say at once that the environment favorable to creativity is a psychological environment, not a physical environment. And he might go on to point out that Dr. Maslow has made this plain in referring to the help the psychotherapist may provide in helping the individual to rediscover his own creative depths. It should be added, however, that the individual must *be* creative for himself—no therapist can do *that* for him. Dr. Maslow writes:

. . . out of this deeper self, out of this portion of ourselves of which we are generally afraid and therefore try to keep under control, out of this comes the ability to play—to enjoy—to fantasy—to laugh—to loaf—to be spontaneous, and, what's most important for us here, creativity, which is a kind of intellectual play, which is a kind of permission to ourselves, to fantasy, to let loose, and to be crazy, privately. (Every really new idea looks crazy, at first.) . . .

Any technique which will increase self-knowledge in depth should in principle increase one's creativity by making available to oneself these sources of fantasy, play with ideas, being able to sail right out of the world and off the earth; getting away from common sense. . . . these primary-creative people are . . . precisely the ones that make trouble in an organization, usually. I wrote down a list of some of their characteristics that would be guaranteed to make trouble. They tend to be unconventional; they tend to be a little bit queer; unrealistic; they are often called undisciplined; sometimes inexact; "unscientific," that is, by a special definition of science. They tend to be called childish by their more compulsive colleagues, irresponsible, wild, crazy, speculative, uncritical, irregular, emotional, and so on. This sounds like a description of a bum or a Bohemian or an eccentric. And it should be stressed, I suppose, that in the early stages of creativeness, you've got to be a bum, and you've got to be a Bohemian, you've got to be crazy. . . .

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## REVIEW

### "THE VOYAGE OF THE GOLDEN RULE"

FIRST, we must congratulate those who persuaded Albert Bigelow, master and captain of the famous ketch which undertook the first protest voyage toward Pacific bomb test area, to write the full story of his adventure. And an adventure it is, with storms on the high seas and storms created by the United States government.

Because of efforts to muzzle the voice of conscience which deliberately chose to be spectacular, the thirty-foot *Golden Rule*, manned by four men, never did reach the Eniwetok boundary, but the determination of the crew won at least a share of the publicity that was sought for the protest. Though it would be difficult to assess the "value" of the effort, it was at least an audible objection to nuclear testing, and Bigelow's book, *The Voyage of the Golden Rule* (Doubleday), is a thought-provoking documentary on the lengths to which the Atomic Energy Commission will go to discredit opponents of its policies.

Albert Bigelow, fortunately, is not a man to be treated lightly. He has served as lieutenant commander in the navy and captained three combat vessels during World War II. In civilian life he has held the post of Housing Commissioner of Massachusetts. He is a member of the Society of Friends and, as his pacifist convictions have deepened, has assumed active work for the American Friends Service Committee, to which he has assigned all income from sale of *The Voyage of the Golden Rule*.

Mr. Bigelow's attitude, a blend of unpretentious assertion with determined conviction, is amply indicated by these passages from his foreword:

This story tries to tell the truth of the voyage of *Golden Rule*. Like the voyage, it is an experiment with truth.

It is very difficult "just to tell the truth." What we *are* is the truth. "Truth," said Tolstoi, "is communicated to men only by deeds of Truth." What we say is too often what we *wish* the truth to be.

And so, my purpose has been to set it down as it was—the bad with the good, the resentment with the kindness, the trivial with the inspired. As the story goes along I have tried to select and present the events, acts, and thoughts with the significance that they had at the time. I have tried to avoid, in the telling, the significance that these things have now come to hold. As best I could, I have saved that backward, critical look for the end.

This story is a personal account; the experiences of one man. Not all would see it my way or say it my way. My words may seem strong, even harsh, in places. If so, it is because I feel that the facts we face are strong, and harsh. This is not a story of an escape from facts, rather it is a story of an adventure, a joint effort, to find the strength to face and handle facts. Many of the facts are evil; the men who do evil are not. In my view there are no evil men; only mistaken ones.

*Golden Rule* was not one man, or four men in a boat, or five men in jail. There were many men and women. Thousands joined and shared in the adventure. I call them plank-owners.

"Plank-owner" is a nautical term describing a member of the original crew of a vessel. The plank-owners of *Golden*

*Rule* are all those who supported the voyage. They were just as much a part of the adventure as those who sailed and those who were jailed. The names of a few plank-owners appear in the story. Those who do not will, I am sure, not feel slighted. They know that they have, equally, my admiration, affection, and thanks.

Apart from the involved story of Bigelow's struggles with Washington, and apart from the exciting details of some difficult seamanship, we are particularly struck by Bigelow's frankness in describing how he arrived at his decision to make the voyage. Here was a man, in many ways like the rest of us, who tended to procrastinate when the odds were against him, but who nevertheless made the big step. Many pacifists had talked of a protest voyage, but Bigelow seemed to be the only person who might conceivably lead such an enterprise. The following is an account of his state of mind as he was drawn to a decision:

Shortly after the failure of the London conference and as the United Nations was about to assemble, the United States announced, on September 15, 1957, a series of tests to take place in Eniwetok, in the Marshall Islands, in April 1958.

I knew at once that this meant me. It was a personal challenge for I knew that there was no one else immediately available with the nautical skill and experience to take command. This meant that if a protest vessel were to be sailed to the area, it would rest on my decision. I knew that it was a tough and dangerous adventure. My friends in NVA knew that a Pacific protest was enormously difficult, but what they did not know was how difficult it really was. They had never "been there." I knew that I had come to one of those narrow places where a man must take a stand. On one side was crushing, arduous responsibility, on the other was aspiration and meaningful purpose to life.

I tried to avoid the idea. "The native hue of resolution was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." During the autumn I tried to put the idea out of my consciousness, hoping childishly that by so doing it would go away. I busied myself with finishing the design and supervision of a new house for which I was responsible in Vermont. . . . I argued to myself that I was a family man: I had a wife, children, grandchildren, parents. I had responsibilities in the community, in my local Friends Meeting. Worst of all, why should this entire matter rest on the shoulders, on the decision, of one man who just happened to have the experience and skills to sail the boat?

There is urgent need for the protest, I argued, but it will be ineffectual. You'll be way out there in the Pacific, the government has a rigid control over the area and no news will even get out. It will be a waste of effort and time—even of your life.

Then there were the technical difficulties. These were wonderfully useful for procrastination. There was no money to buy a boat and, even if there were a boat, how could I delegate the responsibility for the many phases of outfitting in which only I had had experience? Bill Huntington, who was the obvious choice for mate, had had much coastwise cruising experience in sail but had never sailed "blue water." Only I could navigate. Sailing small vessels in the open ocean is a very specialized and difficult business. Alongshore sailing and cruising is to ocean sailing as hiking is to an ascent of Everest. I foresaw that not only all the responsibility but most of the work would fall on me. Forebodingly I said to myself, al-

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### "SELF-ACTUALIZING CREATIVENESS"

HAVING now regained possession of the Maslow paper referred to in this week's leading article (see page 1), we hasten to correct a misapprehension. Our correspondent says that Dr. Maslow "lumps all creative people together, failing to differentiate between levels of creativity." This is not the case. In this paper the psychologist specifically differentiates between what he calls "special talent creativeness" and "self-actualizing creativeness." It is the latter with which he is primarily concerned. Self-actualizing creativeness, he writes—

sprang much more directly from the personality, which showed itself widely in ordinary affairs. . . . Very frequently, it appeared that an essential aspect of SA creativeness was a special kind of perceptiveness that is exemplified by the child in the fable who saw that the king had no clothes on (this, too, contradicts the notion of creativity as products). These people can see the fresh, the raw, the concrete, in ideographic, as well as the generic, the abstract, the rubricized, the categorized and classified. Consequently they live far more in the real world of nature than in the verbalized world of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs and stereotypes that most people confuse with the real world.

The ethical aspect of self-actualizing creativity is intensely interesting:

Duty became pleasure and pleasure merged with duty. The distinction between work and play became shadowy. How could selfish hedonism be opposed to altruism, when altruism became selfishly pleasurable? These most mature of all people were also strongly childlike. These same people, the strongest egos ever described and the most definitely individual, were also precisely the ones who could be most easily ego-less, self-transcending, and problem-centered.

Quite plainly, Dr. Maslow is speaking of a quality of life, a virtually constant attitude in the sort of people he is describing, and not of the more familiar "talent creativity" which manifests itself in a work or a "product." There is appropriateness in this restriction, since it allows attention to the originality and creative ability which are native to all human beings. The great work which needs great talent is, Dr. Maslow proposes, a special case, requiring well-developed secondary processes of criticism, etc.

Readers interested in such questions would do well to re-read the discussion of Walt Whitman in "Children . . . and Ourselves" for Dec. 16, or, better yet, go to the Oct. 26 *New Republic* for Malcolm Cowley's discovery of the "beatnik" phase in Whitman's career. There are clear parallels with Dr. Maslow's analysis.

### BACK TO NATURE?

Since, two weeks ago, in this space, we reported on Drew Pearson's series concerning the use of stilbestrol to artificially fatten cattle and poultry for the market, it should now be noted that on Dec. 10, U.S. Secretary of Health Arthur Flemming announced that he had asked the poultry industry and food retailers to stop selling stilbestrol-treated birds at once. He said further that the manufacturers of stilbestrol preparations had also agreed to suspend the sale of these hormone compounds, which are acknowledged to have produced cancer in experimental animals. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 11.)

Apparently, Mr. Pearson's articles are producing some results. A Los Angeles poultry dealer said:

By law all poultry which has been chemically treated must be marked "caponette." As long as a person doesn't buy any chickens so marked there is no danger of his buying any chemically treated poultry.

A spokesman for California turkey growers claimed that no hormones are used to fatten turkeys raised in this state.

Mr. Flemming said in his announcement that no more than one per cent of all chickens sold are stilbestrol treated, but that he had asked for a voluntary withdrawal of these fowl from the market because "residues of the synthetic hormone stilbestrol had been found in some treated birds."

No enterprising reporter, it seems, went to Mr. Pearson for comment on these statements, but perhaps the Washington columnist will give his reactions in the near future. The only "one per cent" figure for the poultry which have been caponized with stilbestrol seems quite optimistic by comparison with the 85 per cent of the beef cattle of the nation, which, according to Pearson, have been fed stilbestrol compounds. A Department of Agriculture man said that sales of treated birds in the Los Angeles area amount to from ten to fifteen per cent of all fryers purchased.

### CORRECTION

Two weeks ago, in Review, an unfortunate preoccupation with a familiar phrase, "the human situation," led to the misnaming of Joseph Wood Krutch's recent book. The correct title is *Human Nature and the Human Condition*, not "... and the Human Situation." We don't think the mistake did any real harm, but it was a silly one to make, just the same.

**MANAS is a journal of independent inquiry, concerned with study of the principles which move world society on its present course, and with search for contrasting principles — that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism under the conditions of life in the twentieth century. MANAS is concerned, therefore, with philosophy and with practical psychology, in as direct and simple a manner as its editors and contributors can write. The word "manas" comes from a common root suggesting "man" or "the thinker." Editorial articles are unsigned, since MANAS wishes to present ideas and viewpoints, not personalities.**

**The Publishers**



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

JUST two short blocks from our house is a high school football stadium. Not just a playing field with bleachers as in the old days, but a real honest-to-god stadium, with underground dressing-rooms, score boards, impressive overhead illumination for night games, etc., etc. This stadium has been there for quite a while—some twenty years, at least—and it has set the pattern of athletics for our small high school. The girls compete for cheer-leader roles, the team has student managers, and the coach is pretty well paid. Most Friday nights, if we happen to be home, all of us, including the baby, hear a play-by-play description over the loud-speaker, and after the game we are treated to a cacophony of automobile horns, whistles, yells—making quite a parade.

Last Friday night, while this was all going on, we felt we were making a discovery at the level of sociological analysis: that the traditional "good times" of college days seemed to have been moved up four years. These youngsters work out ways to bypass rules against high school fraternities and sororities, and the average student, in his junior and senior years, is fully as sophisticated as his parents were during their stay in the university. And what we felt, in wondering, was this: Since the pattern of athletics and social life begins so early and so fulsomely, won't it be a bit of a bore when the same thing repeats itself in college? And wouldn't it be fine if, when they get to the university the youngsters could have an entirely different orientation? This was probably what Robert Hutchins had in mind when he eliminated professionalized football from the University of Chicago, a startling change in emphasis which brought together serious students and professors who really made something of their experiment in learning.

Another thing: Perhaps some of the natural confusion which one would expect during the early teen years is avoided by having so much style in high school, and perhaps it is only when a student becomes jaded with the social pattern, somewhere during the college stay, that the confusion is able to manifest. Whatever the cause, the result is not always good. A novel on college life by Richard Frede, called *Entry E*, gives a rather frightening picture of college-level attitudes and behavior. "Ed Bogard," a junior, wonders what it is all about, because he has by this time had the opportunity to try every sort of experience for kicks, and there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of meaning to his college existence:

Saturday morning settled into Bogard's consciousness gray and gracious. He awoke passively at seven-thirty A.M., which was a full half hour before his alarm would have gone off. His eyes looked to the window to see what kind of day it was, and his mind recognized the perpetual season and climate of Nowhere Town. To avoid looking at it, he turned on his side and stared at the wall—and thus became conscious of what he guessed was Ed Bogard lying in Ed Bogard's bed. But he wasn't sure. His body felt overrested and underrested, and weak and tense, all at once. And the bed itself seemed feverish and dirty to him. But he did not get up from it. Simply because he was scared. And he didn't know what of.

He had the uneasy feeling that there was something missing, that there was a whole lot missing. But once again he didn't know what it was. Somehow, he decided, he'd awakened with the expectation of something happy. It was as if today was supposed to be Christmas, only there weren't any presents out for him. In fact, everyone had gone away. And his disappointment had turned into fear.

His room was silent. The whole dormitory was silent. You don't have Christmas in a dormitory. But it seemed real, real with the reality of desperation, this something that wasn't there and hadn't happened and maybe didn't even exist at all, even though he missed it from himself, as though whatever it was had actually been taken from him, actually *had* existed and been ripped out, leaving him ripped and bleeding someplace inside himself where an awful lot of torn and mutilated nerves were now suddenly coming out of shock and sending beats of pain like signals up to his mind to tell him that something was gone that shouldn't have been gone, that something had been cheated away from him that should have been his unalterably.

Gone to where? cheated to where?

To Nowhere Town, he told himself, and rolled over flat on his front with his face into the pillow so that his eyes escaped seeing and his mind escaped thinking. . . .

He stood next to his bed and eventually The Third Person blitzed through the numbness he was feeling and said, Bogard son, you're *invisible*; and he wondered if it were true and continued to stand there, not in the least troubled with getting his bearings, but merely considering whether there actually were any bearings to get.

This is an interesting, if depressing, novel. In the end Bogard is suspended when he fails to prevent (by calling the yard police) some intoxicated young men from availing themselves of someone's slightly moronic girl friend; but Bogard, although passive at the level of official action, took care of the victimized girl afterward in a manner that revealed his inherent humaneness.

If you want a novel that does a fair job of disclosing the composition of the high school ethos, you might try John Farris' *Harrison High* (Dell). Farris demonstrates the sophistication of which we were speaking quite effectively, for he wrote this book while still a teen-ager himself. We get a picture of life and love, athletics, and gang marauding, and discover, also, the author's capacity for some rather nihilistic philosophizing, put in the form of a discourse from one of the teachers:

Hendry smiled thinly. "The kids feel as if they have to do all their living today. Because tomorrow the ashes will be cooling."

She looked at him gravely. "Something like that, yes. What can you say to them? Offer them Milton, Shakespeare, the Lake Poets? No, that's not modern. It's not for them. They don't appreciate the worth of learning. The good things in literature are shunted aside. Not to die. Those things will never die. They'll be there when the children want them."

"I wonder," said Hendry, "if they'll never want them. Our civilization is geared differently. We don't educate our kids to want or appreciate or benefit from the knowledge men have been collecting the hard way for centuries. Every mistake, every gain man has made is put down in some form, but any communication older than yesterday's newspaper is looked upon with distaste by most of us. Every American student, who has all the books he could ask for free, is educated as an average integer, to achieve the limited demands of a machine-happy culture. The American is a gregarious imitative unit without a cause or a goal. In the hands of impractical philosophers

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# FRONTIERS

RELIGION

SCIENCE

EDUCATION

## Narrow is the Gate

Now and then a reader writes to ask "what we think about" some writer or group that is beginning to occupy a foreground of attention in the religious or the religio-philosophical field. Usually, we are overtaken by a vast reticence in connection with such questions. This region of inquiry is doubtless filled with truth, however obscure, but it is also filled with numberless similitudes of truth. There is room, therefore, for wide differences of opinion. One can, of course, offer general considerations, but particular judgments involving particular inquirers into the mysteries of religion can easily do injustice, or seem to do injustice, and then if you are to support what you say by argument, you find yourself involved in the thankless task of a program of almost personal criticism. So, for the most part, we leave such matters alone.

Sometimes, however, an exception is made, when the subject under consideration is sufficiently broad to remain impersonal. Take for example the question of Zen Buddhism. We have published several review articles on Zen, nearly all of them inviting the reader to pursue further studies of this iconoclastic form of religious thought. But as we did this, certain misgivings began to inhabit the editorial psyche. "There is another way of looking at these things," we kept arguing with ourselves. And then, with the review of John Blofeld's *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* (Grove Press) in MANAS for Sept. 23, we were able to get the misgivings on paper. A couple of months later we received from a distant reader a letter which expressed in particular terms what we had tried to say with more reserve. This letter should interest other readers:

Much as I understand, comprehend and admire the attitude of Zen followers, I myself think I am unable to go that way.

One reason is that, while I can easily imagine that the Zen followers are right, I am not yet convinced that their way to see things is the only one. It may be that all the things that surround us, and with them our own desires, ambitions, longings, etc., are unreal. It may well be that the reincarnationists (I, for one) are right when they believe that after our present life and interval will come another life like this one, and that the Zen or the more general Buddhist willingness to deny all external reality is the only way to get out of this endless circle [of Samsara]. But even in this latter case, I am not quite sure that I want to get out. My life has been a very active and interesting one, and although I have served over nine years of it in prison, and so can claim to know what suffering means, on the whole I am quite satisfied and do not shrink from the prospect of another life in the future.

But this is not decisive. I am indeed one of those of whom you say that they remain on "a lower rung of the ladder" that leads to perfection. (I am sixty-eight now.)

An old friend, to whom I owe very much in my life, tries to convince me that all that is around us is unreal. When I say that I love humanity, or mankind, he says that this is not the right sort of love, that I ought to meditate always to acquire

the real godly love. He says that in that case I should be much better able than now to help others.

Maybe he is right, and yet, I have *no time* to wait for that!

I was a social worker in prisons during the past eight years of my active life, before retiring. I am not an admirer of the actual prison system—far from it. I think it is utterly obsolete and inadequate. But still there are men suffering from it, subject to it, and I was for some of them—for rather many, I think—the only human being with whom they could speak in full confidence. I could also help them in a material way, finding a job for them when they were released, or a friend to give them a place to stay. But more important was the fact that I could give at least some of them a friendship which kept them from falling into despair. I was not a "superior" to them, and when it happens now and then that I come across one of them in the street, it is as though old friends meet and chat.

Now, what would it have meant for them if I had followed the counsel of my old friend and, instead of going to those lonely men, had retired to meditate in order to acquire a more godly sort of love? It would have meant depriving them of what they needed *now*. It would have been no good for them if I had been full of that godly brand of love later, as at the age of sixty-five I had to retire.

I recently read a novel of a young girl of fifteen who says to her parson that she does not want to go to Heaven, but to stay with those who have to remain outside, to give them consolation. Is not that a nobler attitude than to think only of one's own perfection?

I call this love. Perhaps it is not the highest kind of love. But it is love, anyhow, and it is the sort of love to which I feel more attraction than to the godly sort of love acquired by meditation. . . . This is why I found my innermost thought corroborated by what you say in the last three paragraphs of that article.

Recently we came across a strange and in some ways wonderful volume to which the point of this letter applies, although in another way. The book is *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana* by Th. Stcherbatsky, Ph. D., published in Leningrad in 1927 by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. The book is a careful, scholarly study of the transformations of the doctrine of Nirvana, in Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, from the sixth century B.C. onward, and showing how other schools of Indian thought, such as the Vedanta, contributed to and were modified by the changes and renovations in Buddhist thought. This work, which is in English, includes a translation of a treatise on Relativity by Nagarjuna, and a commentary and appreciation of the treatise by Candrakirti. The writer is clearly no partisan of dialectical materialism, nor concerned with the "sociology" of religion. His interest is philosophical and he is obviously a great admirer of the masterly intellectuality of the Indian thinkers and justly appreciative of their subtle distinctions and perceptions. Yet the work is essentially theological in content.

After reading it, we went to Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, and read again some passages in *The Creed of Buddha* by Edmond Holmes. Somehow, they seemed closer to the



spirit of Gautama than the scholarly study. One could, we think, exhaust the resources of scholarship without ever *feeling* the impact of the overwhelming compassion which was at the heart of both the labors and the teachings of the Buddha. If the grasp of this motive be frustrated, then *all* is frustrated, and the logic and the metaphysics and even the psychology, become dry and dead as dust.

This is not to suggest that the intellectual aspect of Buddhism is negligible. It is not, since feeling without precise understanding can easily become mere psychic intoxication. But intellectual understanding without feeling ceases to be understanding, becoming, instead, the sort of logic-chopping which Buddha uncompromisingly opposed.

Why should we, for understanding of Buddhism, go to a couple of Englishmen, Arnold and Holmes? Why not? They are men, like the Buddha, with the same inner potentialities as all other men—the same potentialities as those which in Buddha flowered to illumine the world. It was still another Englishman, G. Lowes Dickinson, not himself a Buddhist, who put into a few words the meaning of Buddhism to the great mass of its followers, throughout the Orient:

It meant, surely, . . . that warm impulse of pity and love. . . . not the hope or desire for extinction, but the charming dream of thousands of lives, past and to come, in many forms, many conditions, many diverse fates. The pessimism of the master is as little likely as his high philosophy to have reached the mind or the heart of the people. The whole history of Buddhism, indeed, shows that it did not, and does not. What touched them in him was the saint and the lover of animals and men. And this love it was that flowed in streams over the world, leaving wherever it passed, in literature and art, in pictures of flowers or mountains, in fables and poems and tales, the traces of its warm and humanising flood.

The "high philosophy" and the "pessimism" ought not to be neglected by those who feel a compulsion to pursue their meaning, but if in the process the love is to be forgotten, it would be better to leave the whole thing alone.

What, then, is the right balance to maintain among mind, heart, and action? It is the obscurity of the answer to this question which gives so much difficulty, as well as confusion, in serious religious and philosophical thought.

You encounter plenty of brave axemen who chop the Gordian knot with a high and righteous impatience. *Lay your faith on the line*, they say. And they add, *Do as we—or I—do!*

They are right, of course. They are right in that a man ought to lay his faith on the line. But *which line?*

Then there is the argument of the "man of meditation." He, according to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, is superior to the man of action. He is superior, however, because he *comprehends* as well as acts. This is in large measure the meaning of the *Gita*—its main point. The man of action has the virtue of doing his duty, but the man of meditation, who *also acts*, embodies the meaning of duty—its whole round and fulfillment—so that it takes place within him, and thus, by a transcendental paradox, he does *nothing*. He is at once involved and uninvolved.

These are attitudes for which, it might be said, there is spontaneous or self-originating motivation in human life. But then, quickly added, are the imitative motives of piety

which make a man do what he does, not because he *wants* to, but because he feels he *ought* to. And then, again in addition, there are still less worthy motives connected with behavior which seeks the admiration, the belief, the confidence, and, finally, the subservience and even the *money*, of others.

It is this complex palimpsest of motives in religious and religio-philosophical behavior which makes criticism difficult and often presumptuous. When you talk about the "right" path, you may seem to be impugning the motives of everyone who chooses some other path. Or it may not be a seeming, but an actual impugning.

What may be said, perhaps, is that no path is a "true" path unless it brings increasing awareness of these difficulties and distinctions. To neglect the sources of self-deception is itself a sectarian act. Here, perhaps, we have a pretty good definition of "tolerance." Genuine tolerance arises, not from a good-natured neglect of criticism and analysis, but from so thorough-going a determination to understand the fires of partisanship in oneself that it will not rest until there is equal understanding of the partisanship of others. For the proposition one starts out with is that others and oneself are not essentially different. If one accepts a view as truth without being able to grasp why others reject it, he is a sectarian. And if he has a self-flattering explanation of why others reject it, he is a self-righteous sectarian. That is why, as the Zen Buddhists say, so long as you want to *become* a Buddha, there is not the slightest possibility that it will happen.

One acquires, from such reflections, a basic skepticism, and even a little revulsion, for all those religions and cults and leaders of cults which proceed with a high and exclusive self-confidence that, now, at last, the truth is revealed, by means of a new talisman. The three things that cannot be allowed in serious religious and philosophical investigation are Miracle, Mystery, and Authority. There are seeming miracles in human experience, and relative mystery and relative authority, but the business of the investigator is to eliminate the miracles, reduce the mystery and abandon the authority. You don't accept them in order, *some day*, to get rid of them. You start the process of clearance at the beginning. Accordingly, a new dress for old slogans can never be made attractive enough for a serious investigator. Nor are the magic bludgeons of any value. People who speak of God the way patriots wave a flag are not people with whom to hold an intelligent conversation. People for whom formulas are more important than the meanings they once contained are no help. People whose idea of salvation is anything less than salvation for the whole world are not people who can be of much help to the world—for in this case the individual *is* the world, no better, no worse, nothing special.

So, when this is the way you figure things out, the "vast reticence" of which we spoke seems very much in order.

#### THINKING ABOUT FREEDOM

(Continued)

Of course this kind of Bohemian business is not necessarily uniform or continued. I am talking about people who are able to be like that *when they want to be*. . . . These same people can afterwards put on their caps and gowns and become grown up, rational, sensible, orderly, and so on, and examine

with a critical eye what they produce in a great burst of enthusiasm, and creative fervor. . . .

If we say that the environment is of small importance in such considerations, we mean that it is not a primary consideration in primary activity. The ideal environment for creative activity is the environment which encourages people to *honor* creative activity, teaching them to cherish it and to seek this activity in others as well as in themselves. This means a minimum of requirements or "rules." It means a complete lack of dogma concerning material concerns, although this by no means implies an indifference to injustice, a tolerance of cruelty, or patience with ugliness, gross vulgarity, and similar prerogatives of an acquisitive civilization. But the canons that are important in relation to creativity do not stand in *direct* relation to the canons of political freedom and economic justice. The forms of political freedom and economic justice are capable of precise definition; the canons for the creative society deal with human attitudes, not socio-political forms.

There is one sentence in the Frontier article—the one quoted by our critic—which does indeed need explanation. When it was said that "the man who practices freedom is only carelessly or incidentally an angry critic of his environment," something like the following was meant: If an artist can find nothing but bad brushes to paint with, he will not dissipate all his energies leading a revolution against bad brushes—but will develop techniques which make it possible for him to paint with bad brushes. He may even discover things that bad brushes do better than good brushes. It is one thing to fight the good fight for good brushes, and another to start in to paint. C. Wright Mills is a special case since his originality and freedom happen to lie in the field of social discovery, invention, and reform. In his case, the practice of freedom is precisely what contributes to a change in the environment, so the point of our critic is well made in this instance.

What can we do for other people, so far as their creativity is concerned? We can do two things—first, the thing that the Founding Fathers tried to do—to create and preserve the broad socio-political structure in which men can practice freedom without oppression and discouragement, and, second, the things that good teachers have always done in any environment—foster and encourage free and original thought and action. That is what we can do for others.

What can we do for ourselves? Well, we can try to discover in ourselves the depths of originality, the ground of our primary being, of which Dr. Maslow speaks. This is the other kind of thinking about freedom, and if this kind of thinking does not get done, there will be little originality, and eventually, little freedom, since the practice of freedom by individuals is what creates the values which, upon recognition, cause men to labor for a free society.

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#### REVIEW—(Continued)

though most of us will be Friends, Quakers that is, there has to be an understanding of the discipline of the sea—that the master and captain is completely in charge. How can this possibly be accommodated to the Quaker principle of unity and making decisions together? The more I thought, the more action dissolved into idea, the higher the occasion became piled with difficulty. I had almost found enough difficulties to justify not going at all.

But the inspiration continued. God persisted, Bill Huntington persisted, and others persisted. I had worked myself into a corner, into a box of conflicts. I had to go; and yet I could not go.

This, we think, is a book that should be purchased. When our children are old enough to read adult adventure stories, *The Voyage of the Golden Rule* could be required reading—for here is adventure of a sort which exacts no price from anyone, yet demonstrates that none of the machinations of government can prevent a single man or group of men from acting as their consciences dictate. The men who feel, with Bigelow, like "Paladin," are indeed "knights without armor in a savage land," but the savagery of our time has been so conventionalized that it can only be identified by motivation. The savagery against which Bigelow's crew and the later crew of the *Phoenix* met in battle was the savagery of diplomacy based upon the final threat of war.

#### CHILDREN—(Continued)

education has become a bargain-basement special. Everybody can get it and nobody wants it. Learning is for eggheads. The average American doesn't know anything and doesn't care. He is an island entire in himself. Our scientific democracy has lulled him in his ignorance. He works a forty-hour week attaching hood ornaments in the Ford factory or installing air conditioners or selling insurance. He spends the rest of his time doing all the silly things everybody else does for entertainment. He is bored, restless, muddled. He's scared without knowing why he's scared. The truth is, he is a man on the edge of a cliff with all men. He could take a lesson from history—if he knew any history. There is no security in the comfortable world science has created, because science has manufactured new ways to go to war along with the high standard of living. It's paradoxical, yet part of an old pattern, that a highly technical society can be forced into the last war anybody will ever fight because a handful of illiterate desert tribesmen somewhere will want a piece of somebody else's desert, or want to set up a government of their own to mismanage and eventually forfeit to a calculating collector of such governments.



